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Call for abstracts

Gendered professional career paths in the service sector

Clare Brindley, Nottingham Trent University, ENGLAND

Carley Foster, Nottingham Trent University, ENGLAND

Dan Wheatley, Nottingham Trent University, ENGLAND

Valerie Caven, Nottingham Trent University, ENGLAND

Elena Navarro Astor, Universidad Politecnica Valencia, SPAIN

Marina Dabic, University of Zagreb, CROATIA

Anne Laure Humbert, European Institute for Gender Equality, Vilnius, LITHUANIA

Women have complex careers, referred to as multi-directional (Baruch, 2004), patchwork, boundaryless, or frayed (Peel and Inkson, 2004: 544), which are distinct from men. It is women, more often than not, who compromise their career by fitting paid work around household responsibilities, including care (Hardill, 2002; Garcia et al, 2011). Moreover, there is much evidence that highlights the phenomenon of women and the glass ceiling (see for example, Broadbridge, 2008), and the lack of women on corporate boards (see for example, Sealey and Vinnicombe, 2012). However, there has been little work that has focussed on a particular sector which has attempted to unpick the career paths of women to illustrate their non-linear structure and the influence of sectoral context on career choices.

This track aims to update and extend knowledge of gendered professional careers in the service sector, including a focus on the timing and nature of career transitions for women which reflect the complex demands of work and home life. The service sector is an overarching term to describe where work includes “the presence of the customer within the labour process” (Korczynski, 2002: 194) and includes “the dimensions of intangibility, perishability, variability, simultaneous production and consumption and inseparability” (ibid). A profession is defined by Larsen (1977) as the transformation of special knowledge and skills into social and economic rewards. It differs from an occupation because it possesses aspects of monopoly control and market power over its mode of operating (Johnson, 1972). For Kumar (2010) careers in professional services refer to accountancy and law and further extrapolation could include, for example, academia, architecture and medicine (Caven et al, 2012). A wider interpretation of professional service roles might also include semi-professional jobs (such as banking and consultancy) and occupational groups attempting to professionalise (Muzio and Tomlinson, 2012). The service sector in particular contains a number of feminised industries such as marketing but as a sector it is one which reflects important gendered roles. Indeed, services with their customer orientated focus (Korczynski, 2002) disproportionately employ women. Analysis of recent data from the UK *Labour Force Survey* (Brindley et al, 2013; Foster et al, 2011;) exploring women working in marketing, a particular branch of the professional service sector, found that women’s careers in marketing are not homogenous or linear with self-employment appearing to be a mid-career transition phase for women marketers. Certainly, research suggests that women’s career paths are different from men in that they do not conform to a hierarchical career trajectory. Traditionally the term ‘career’ has been used to describe long-term progression, a ladder, or linear promotion, within an occupation, or through a series of occupations involving increasing levels of responsibility at each stage (Evetts, 2000). In order to capture the complexity of female experiences of work, including the career transitions women may experience, the notion of a ‘patchwork’ or ‘kaleidoscope’ career have emerged (Bateson, 1990). The reasons for complex career paths have been explained by women’s continued dual or even triple roles, as employees, mothers and care providers (Hardill, 2002; Perrons et al., 2005). If one combines organisational structures and the conflict between work and home roles, as illustrated by Krider and Ross (1997) and

the prevailing masculine culture (Broadbridge, 2008), then the strategies that women in the service sector adopt during their career, and the career trajectories they experience at different stages in their life, need to be explored.

This track explores the rationale driving movements inter and intra the service sector, for example into self-employment, part-time work, volunteering, junior roles because of flexibility requirements, the impact of the glass ceiling and the need for autonomy at work. Questions remain over movements between career strategies, the factors influencing career decisions, and the permanence of transitional movements. In addition, questions also remain regarding the role of men in the career paths of women in this sector. Do they act as a barrier in the household and/or workplace, or are broader institutional and social factors more central concerns?

Over ten years ago Maclaren and Catterall (2000) argued that there was research available on women working in professions like medicine, teaching and banking but given the changes wrought in these sectors as a result of policy directives, technological impacts and economic forces, what is the position 14 years on and what of other service industries such as the rise of retailing and care? This track invites studies that draw on international data on professional service sector careers and that draw on interdisciplinary research that utilises theories from the marketing, retailing, entrepreneurship, gender, economic and career disciplines.

The following is an indicative but not exhaustive list of potential topics that may be considered:

- Professional career paths in the service sector: the developing versus the developed world;
- Professionalisation of services and realised outcomes for men and women working within the sector;
- Gendered analysis of career transitions within the service sector;
- Challenges for professional bodies in supporting women in the service sector through their career stages;
- Service sector industry papers which consider professional gendered careers in for example, retailing, law, architecture, accountancy, marketing, finance, medicine and care.

Abstracts of approximately 500 words (ONE page, Word document NOT PDF, single spaced, excluding references, no header, footers or track changes) are invited by 1st November 2013 with decisions on acceptance to be made by stream leaders within one month. All abstracts will be peer reviewed. New and young scholars with 'work in progress' papers are welcomed. Papers can be theoretical or theoretically informed empirical work. In the case of co-authored papers, ONE person should be identified as the corresponding author. Due to restrictions of space on the conference schedule, multiple submissions by the same author will not be timetabled. Abstracts should be emailed to: clare.brindley@ntu.ac.uk Abstracts should include **FULL** contact details, including your name, department, institutional affiliation, mailing address, and e-mail address. State the title of the stream to which you are submitting your abstract. Note that no funding, fee waiver, travel or other bursaries are offered for attendance at GWO2014.

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